

15.0.7.
5651



Mr. *Howard's*
DISCOURSE

Occasioned by the Death

OF HIS

CONSORT.

THE
DIGNITY

OF THE

OF THE

A
DISCOURSE

Occasioned by the Death of
Mrs. ELIZABETH HOWARD,

Who departed this Life

On Lord's Day Morning, April 13, 1777,

Aged 43.

Delivered the Lord's Day after her Decease.

By her bereaved Consort,

SIMEON HOWARD, A. M.

Pastor of the West Church in Boston.

Her Children arise up and call her blessed ; her Husband
also, and he praiseth her.

King SOLOMON.

BOSTON, NEW-ENGLAND :

PRINTED BY T. & J. FLEET, and J. GILL.

MDCCLXXVII.



To the Society usually wor-
shipping at the West Meet-
ing House in B O S T O N,

THE following Discourse,
published at their request,
is respectfully inscribed, in
grateful acknowledgment of
their regard to the memory
of Mrs. HOWARD, and of their
generosity and friendship to

The AUTHOR.

A Funeral Discourse.

2 TIM. I. 10.

—“ Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.”

THE natural evils to which mankind is subject, in the present state, are dreaded, not only for the painful sensations which they give, but because they are considered as having a tendency to put a period to human life ;—an event which we naturally fear, and wish to keep off. The professors of christianity, when St. Paul wrote this epistle, were greatly exposed to such evils from the malice of their enemies. He himself had a large share of them ; and was then in bonds on account of the gospel. And he seems to have been afraid that the consideration of these things would discourage Timothy from a faithful discharge of his ministerial duty. He, therefore, exhorts him to be firm, and resolute, and patient, what-ever

ever sufferings he might be exposed to, in the prosecution of this good work. This exhortation he enforces by a variety of considerations, in this and the following chapters; among which, those suggested in the text are of great weight: Where, after having mentioned the kindness and grace of God, in calling the Gentiles to the profession and enjoyment of christianity, and observing that, though God had determined from the beginning, to grant them this favor, yet his gracious purpose had, in a great measure, been kept hid from former ages, “but is now made manifest, by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ;” he reminds him of two important blessings for which mankind are indebted to this appearing, or the mediation of Jesus Christ, viz. the destruction of death, and the discovery of eternal life—“Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel:” As if he had said, you have no reason to relinquish your duty, through fear of any thing which wicked and cruel men can do to you; for let them do their worst, death is the utmost effect of their power; and this ought not to affright you, because Christ hath abolished death, and discovered by his gospel a state of future and eternal glory.

BUT without paying any further regard to the connection of the words; I propose, in discoursing from them,

I. To

I. To consider what the Apostle here intends by death.

II. To shew in what sense, and by what means Christ hath abolished death.

III. To illustrate and confirm the proposition in the latter clause, viz. that Christ hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.

AFTER I have briefly considered these particulars, the subject will be closed with some reflections by way of application.

I. I am to enquire what is meant, in the text, by death.

Now this term generally signifies, both in common language and in the sacred scriptures, that event which puts a period to this present animal life, the separation of the soul and body; in consequence of which, the body becomes incapable of all action, enjoyment and suffering, and returns to the dust from whence it was taken. There can be no doubt but this death is intended by the Apostle.

BUT this word in holy writ, especially in the New Testament, frequently means that eternal punishment which the wicked are to suffer in a future state. In this sense it is used by our blessed Saviour, when he says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my sayings,

“ sayings, he shall never see death :” And by the Apostle Paul, when he tells us, “ to be “ carnally minded is death :” And by the Apostle John, when he says, “ he that loveth “ not his brother abideth in death.” This is sometimes called the second death. Thus we read in the Revelations, “ he that evercometh, “ shall not be hurt of the second death ;” whereas “ the fearful and unbelieving, &c. “ shall have their part in the lake which burn- “ eth with fire and brimstone ; which is the “ second death.” There can, I think, be no doubt, but that the Apostle uses the term death, in the passage under consideration, to include this future and eternal punishment, as well as the dissolution of the body : For death in the former part of the text, is evidently opposed to life and immortality in the latter part ; but “ immortality, eternal life, everlasting life,” and the like expressions in scripture, always mean, not merely an endless existence, but an happy one, exempted from all punishment and suffering. By death therefore in the text we are to understand both temporal and eternal death.

II. I am next to shew in what sense, and by what means Christ hath abolished death, both temporal and eternal.

You are sensible that He hath not so abolished temporal death, as to exempt any of the human race from dying. In consequence of the transgression of our first Parents, it is appointed

appointed unto all men once to die ; and the dust must return to the earth from whence it was taken. The wise and the good, as well as the fool and the brutish person, must in this sense, perish. As death reigned from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to this time, so he will continue to reign to the end of the world, and persons of all characters must bow to his dreary sceptre. How then hath Christ abolished this death ? I answer by rescuing the body from his dominion, and restoring it to life again : For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. At an appointed time, all who are in their graves, all who shall have died from the beginning of the world to that day, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth to life. Then shall the soul and body, both which are necessary to constitute a man, be reunited, and enjoy a more perfect life than this state admits of : Then will it appear that man, instead of suffering any loss by death, is greatly improved and perfected by it ; so that this enemy will be quite baffled and his malice defeated. It is indeed said, in the text, Christ *bath* abolished death ; but this form of expression is used rather to assure us that he will do this in due time, than to assert that he hath actually done it already. Christ has began, but has not yet finished the destruction of death : For this, we are told, is the last enemy that shall be destroyed. But Christ, who hath the keys of death and of hell, and who, by the appoint-

ment of God, must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet, will at length intirely overthrow this formidable tyrant, as well as all other tyrants, not leaving him one single subject through all his gloomy realms. As to himself, Christ has indeed already abolished death, by rising triumphant from the grave, after he had been crucified and slain by wicked hands : whereby he has given a sensible proof that the divine power is able also to quicken our “ mortal bodies,” and restore them to life ; and given us an earnest and pledge of a general resurrection, when the bodies of all men shall be as compleatly delivered from the bondage of corruption, as his own, and no trace be left of the injury which we received from the first Adam.

LET us now consider in what sense Christ hath abolished eternal death. I need not tell you that the holy scriptures, our only safe instructor upon this point, neither assert nor intimate that He hath obtained for all men an actual exemption from this death ; on the contrary, they plainly tell us, that many “ shall go away into everlasting punishment.” The sense therefore, in which our Saviour hath destroyed eternal death, is this ; that He hath opened a way for ALL to escape it ; and that all who put themselves under his guidance and protection shall actually escape it.—He invites all without exception to do this, in the plainest and most affectionate terms.

And

And he will certainly preserve all who accept the invitation from that strange punishment which is reserved for the workers of iniquity, and give unto them everlasting life; not merely an endless existence, but an endless happiness in the presence of God, where they shall never be in danger of being hurt by the second death.

THE means by which the Son of God hath done these great things for mankind, were by dying and rising again from the dead. The following passages of Scripture, among many others that might be mentioned, will make this sufficiently evident. "For as much
 "as the children are partakers of flesh and
 "blood, he also himself likewise took part of
 "the same, that through death he might de-
 "stroy him that had the power of death,
 "that is, the devil; and deliver them who
 "through fear of death, were all their life-
 "time subject to bondage." "Christ hath
 "redeemed us from the curse of the law,
 "being made a curse for us; that he might
 "reconcile us unto God by the cross." He
 "hath redeemed us to God by his blood."
 "Christ our high priest—having offered
 "himself without spot unto God, obtained
 "eternal redemption for us." —"Thus it
 "behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from
 "the dead; that repentance and remission of
 "sins should be preached in his name among
 "all nations." "He was delivered for our
 B 2 "offences,

“ offences, and raised for our justification.”
 “ Blessed be the God, and Father of our Lord
 “ Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a
 “ lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus
 “ Christ from the dead.” These declarations, without any comment, plainly teach us that it was by dying as a sacrifice for sin, and rising again from the dead, that Jesus Christ hath obtained for men redemption from destruction; or abolished death in the sense above-mentioned.

THE next thing proposed was,

III. To illustrate and confirm the proposition in the latter part of the text, viz. that life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.

THIS expression, “ life and immortality,” means immortal or eternal life; and this, as has been before observed, intends not merely an endless existence, but a state of everlasting happiness: So that the meaning of the assertion is, that Jesus Christ by his gospel has given us greater assurance, and a more clear discovery of a future and eternal state of happiness for the righteous, than the world had before.

ONE thing is here implied, and another asserted; to each of which, I shall speak distinctly.

I. THE

1. THE thing implied is, that mankind was not fully acquainted with this doctrine, before the publication of the gospel.

THIS was undoubtedly the case with the heathen world. For though in general they had some expectation of a future state, yet their conceptions of it were uncertain and obscure. Some of their wise men appear to have been in doubt whether they were to exist beyond the grave, though they thought the thing probable. Their moral writers did not generally enforce their precepts by a consideration of future rewards and punishments. Those who expected that good men would be happy after death, knew not when this happiness would commence, in what it would consist, or whether it would be unchangeable and eternal. They had no conception that the body which mouldered to dust, would ever be raised to life again, and united to the soul. This was by some thought to be a thing which God himself could not effect; so essentially did they err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. The transmigration of the same soul into several bodies, one after another, was an opinion of many philosophers: And this was inconsistent with the resurrection; because, upon this supposition, there must be more human bodies than souls. When the Stoics and Epicureans heard St. Paul speak of the resurrection, they made a jest of it, as an absurd and incredible tale. And the Apostle more than intimates that

that the heathens had little or no knowledge of a future state of happiness in what he says to the Ephesians, "Remember that ye being in "time passed Gentiles in the flesh—HAVING "NO HOPE and without God in the world." In a word, if the heathens had some expectation of a state of existence after death, they had none at all of that "immortal life" which the gospels reveals.

THE Jews were undoubtedly less defective in their knowledge upon this point, than other nations. There are several intimations of a future state and of a resurrection, in their holy scriptures.* Nor can there be any doubt, but that good men among them, in general, hoped and believed that they should be happy after death. But still these doctrines were not delivered in plain and express terms. The law of Moses was enforced only by temporal sanction: And some christian writers have doubted whether there be any where in the Old Testament any reference to a future state at all; supposing that all the passages which have been thought to relate to it, are capable of a different interpretation. There are also some passages in the Old Testament, that at first view appear inconsistent with this doctrine. Thus Job says, "My days are "spent without hope—mine eye shall no more "see good.—As the cloud is consumed, and "vanisheth away; so he that goeth down to "the grave, shall come up no more." We find

* Job xix. 23—27. Dan. xii. 2. Hosea xiii. 14.

find the Psalmist speaking in the same strain,
 “ Shall the dead arise and praise thee ? Shall
 “ thy loving kindness be known in the grave ?
 “ The dead praise not the Lord, neither any
 “ that go down into silence.” Man is “ a
 “ wind that passeth away and cometh not
 “ again.” Solomon also speaks in the same
 desperate language. “ For the living know
 “ that they shall die ; but the dead know not
 “ any thing, neither have they any more a re-
 “ ward, for the memory of them is forgotten.”

These passages seem, rather to destroy than
 establish the doctrine of a future state : And
 though they are not sufficient to set aside the
 plain intimations which are given of it in
 other places ; yet they probably had a tendency
 to weaken the belief of it. It is certain that
 this doctrine was by no means universally re-
 ceived among the Jews. The Sadduces, a learn-
 ed and considerable sect among them, expressly
 denied it. And their principles, we are told,
 by the historian Josephus, were generally
 adopted by the rich and great men of that
 nation. The Pythagorean doctrine of the
 transmigration of souls, seems likewise to have
 been believed by some of the Jews, at least.
 The disciples of our Lord were probably of
 this opinion, who asked him respecting the
 man that was born blind, whether that cala-
 mity was inflicted for his own sin, or for the
 sin of his parents ; for their question plainly
 implies that they thought the man had been
 capable of sinning before his birth ; that is,
 most likely, in some former body.

UPON

UPON the whole, it appears from what has been briefly suggested, that the world stood in great need of some further instructions respecting a future state, than either the light of nature, or the Jewish revelation gave. And that what was so much wanted, has by the unspeakable goodness of God been granted, we shall see in considering the next particular ; which is,

2. THAT Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel ; that is, hath made a clear and full discovery of a future state of happiness ; and taught us every thing respecting it, which it concerns us to know.

FOR the confirmation of this assertion, let me observe ; that the gospel plainly teaches us, that, though our bodies are short-lived perishing beings, yet the human soul, the rational principle within us, and our better part, is immortal, and exists in a separate state ; and that when the good man dies, his soul goes immediately into a state of happiness to be present with the Lord. Thus we find our blessed Saviour telling his disciples that “ those who kill the body cannot kill the soul.” And declaring to the penitent thief on the cross ; “ to day shalt thou be “ with me in paradise.” Thus we find St. Stephen, when he was stoned to death, committing his departing soul into the hands of his Saviour, saying, “ Lord Jesus, receive my
“ spirit.”

“spirit.” The Apostle Paul also speaks of being “present with the Lord,” as the certain and immediate consequence of dying, or being absent from the body. And the Apostle Peter speaks of death, as the putting off or laying aside the body. From these passages it appears to be plainly the doctrine of the gospel, that the happiness of the righteous commenceth immediately upon their death ; that the soul, instead of falling into a state of forgetfulness and insensibility, when the body dies, is carried directly to heaven, to join the church of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect. This is a glorious discovery of the gospel which the world had no certain knowledge of before its publication. The heathens might wish and hope for such a thing, and so might the Jews upon better grounds : But neither of them had any express promise of it, or certain information about it. The region beyond the grave was all dark, before it was illuminated by the sun of righteousness. The gospel further assures us that the human body, which now dies and mingles with the earth, shall in due time be raised to life again. “For the hour is coming,” saith our blessed Saviour, “in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth.” “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” The same thing

is also asserted in many other passages, in the plainest terms; so that we cannot doubt the truth of this doctrine, if we believe the gospel; "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again," we must also believe that "them which sleep "in Jesus, God will bring with him." Nor do the scriptures speak merely of the resurrection of *the dead*, but of the resurrection of the *body* in such terms as plainly to intimate that the same body which was laid in the grave shall be raised to life again. Thus it is said, "He that raised up Jesus from the "dead, shall quicken our mortal bodies," the bodies which now die shall be quickened, or made alive again. Again it is said, "This "corruptible must put on incorruption, and "this mortal must put on immortality:" that is, this same body which is now mortal and corruptible, shall be rendered immortal and incorruptible. We are not indeed to suppose that every particular body will consist of all the same particles of matter, when it shall be raised, that belonged to it when it died. This may not be possible: But that the raised body shall so far consist of the same matter, that the dying one did, as that it may properly be called the same body, I think, is plainly intimated in scripture. We have indeed an example of this in the resurrection of Christ; nor can we conceive why it should not be as easy for the divine power to raise the same body, as to create one out of different matter. But though the same body

which

which dies shall be raised again, yet, the gospel acquaints us, that it shall be greatly altered: "For the Lord Jesus Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." In what respects the body that shall be raised will differ from the present body the Apostle tells us, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." To the body thus freed from all the seeds of corruption, from all its present imperfections, weaknesses and wants, shall the soul be again united; and then shall the saints enter upon the possession of that inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, which is now reserved in heaven for them. And "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "death is swallowed up in victory." The souls of the righteous will indeed be happy while their bodies lie in the grave; but their happiness will not be compleat, till after the resurrection. Then shall they, being publickly and solemnly acquitted by the Saviour and Judge of the world, and owned as his friends and disciples, go away into life eternal, and be as happy as they can desire, in the absence of all evil, and the possession of all good: "For they shall hunger no more, neither thirst

“ any more, neither shall the sun light on
 “ them nor any heat: for the Lamb which is
 “ in the midst of the throne, shall feed them,
 “ and shall lead them unto living fountains
 “ of waters: And God shall wipe away all
 “ tears from their eyes.” These are figura-
 tive expressions to denote the perfection of
 the saints blessedness. And there are many
 other descriptions, which must give us a most
 exalted idea of this happiness; as when we
 are told that it will consist in knowing, loving
 and being like God; in being seated on a
 throne with the glorious redeemer, and enjoy-
 ing the society of holy angels. What is the
 happiness which the heathens expected in their
 elysium compared with this?—But further
 we are assured that this happiness shall be
 unchangeable and eternal. It is called in
 scripture “ eternal glory,” “ eternal salvation,”
 an “ eternal inheritance,” and “ eternal life.”
 This adds great weight to the happiness of
 heaven, that it will not be liable to change
 or period. How different is it, in this respect,
 from every thing which is called happiness
 here below! How uncertain, how fleeting
 are all earthly enjoyments! We call them
 ours to-day, and to-morrow they are gone
 from us to return no more. Should not the
 greatness and the eternity of this happiness
 captivate our hearts and engage us with the
 greatest zeal and diligence to seek it? It was
 for this purpose, that the divine goodness has
 given us such an engaging description of the
 glories

glories of heaven. And that we might not be at a loss how to know how we might lay hold on eternal life, the gospel has plainly told us what we must do to be saved, viz. repent of all our sins, believe on the Lord Jesus and keep his commandments; at the same time offering us the assistances of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to do thus. I will only observe further, that as the gospel makes a full discovery of a future state, and of every thing respecting it, which it concerns us to know, so we have the most satisfactory evidence that what it teaches upon these points is true. The heathens had so many absurd and improbable fables blended with their doctrine of a future state, as greatly prejudiced the belief of it. The stories which were told about the river Styx, Charon's boat, &c. could not be believed by any considerate men: Nor can it be doubted but that the absurdity of these tales made some give up the whole doctrine with which they were connected. But the doctrine of the gospel upon this point, is worthy to be believed, as being in itself, in every part of it, a rational and consistent doctrine; as well as on account of the character of its author: Who by the many mighty works which he did during his ministry, proved himself to be the great messenger and prophet of God; and was emphatically declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead.

THUS life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. The doctrine is more
clearly

clearly known, and better confirmed than it was before this dispensation. The veil, which before, hid the regions beyond the grave from the world, is drawn aside ; and a scene of light and joy unspeakable presents itself to our view, into which Jesus the fore-runner is for us entered. Whither he is gone we know, and the way we know: And this we also know, that if we do his commandments we shall at length go to be with him where he is, to behold his glory, and partake of the joys of eternity.

LET me now offer some reflections by way of application.

i. WE see from this subject what great obligations mankind is under to Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. To him we are immediately indebted for our hopes of deliverance from death and destruction, and for all our prospects of happiness beyond the grave. He hath not only discovered a state of future glory, but it is he that hath opened a way to it. The sacred Scriptures evidently teach us that none of the sinful children of Adam can obtain eternal life, in any other way than through his mediation and suffering; that death would forever have held all the fallen race under his dominion, if Christ had not interposed to rescue them. To Him, therefore, let us, with the warmest gratitude, ascribe everlasting glory and honor, praise and thanksgiving. But,

2. LET

2. LET us also remember our obligations to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whose free unsupplicated goodness we are ultimately indebted for all the blessings of the gospel. It was He who formed the glorious plan of salvation by Christ, before the world began ; and when the fulness of time was come, sent forth his Son to redeem us from the curse of the law : And His Providence was nearly concerned in, and directed all those events by which death is abolished, and life and immortality are brought to light. All is to be ultimately resolved into the unmerited love and benignity of Almighty God. Wherefore, “ blessed be the God and Father
 “ of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according
 “ to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us
 “ again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection
 “ of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and
 “ that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven
 “ for those, who are kept by the power of
 “ God through faith unto salvation, ready to
 “ be revealed in the last time.”

3. THE consideration of this subject should reconcile good men to the thoughts of death, and make them willing to leave the world whenever God calls them. As to such, Christ hath made death to be only exchanging this for a better state ; a passage out of this troublesome world unto life eternal. And who that reflected upon the sufferings to which
 we

we are liable here, and the happiness of the future state, but what would be willing to make the exchange? What has this life to engage our love compared with the happiness of heaven? Let the good man's worldly circumstances be ever so agreeable, let his prospects be ever so promising, he has no reason to be unwilling to give them all up, for the sake of going to be ever with the Lord. Whether he hath lived a longer or a shorter time in the world it matters not. If he hath lived by faith in the Son of God, and kept his commandments, death cannot come too soon for him. And though he comes in the guise of an enemy, and makes a formidable appearance, he is in truth a conquered enemy, has lost his sting and can really do us no hurt, if we are the servants of Christ. Let us then sincerely endeavor to obey the gospel, and we shall have no reason to fear the approach of death, and may even with joy hope for it.

4. THIS subject affords us abundant matter of consolation under the troubles and afflictions which we meet with in the world. If we bear them with patience, and acquit ourselves well, it will be but a little while, before they will be followed with everlasting joy and gladness. And indeed the subject we have been upon is of vast importance in this view: For when we are oppressed with the miseries and calamities of life, and experience the uncertainty and unsatisfying nature
of

of all worldly enjoyments, it must be an unspeakable satisfaction, to be assured that there is a more durable and happy state beyond the grave, which lies open to us. Were it not for this prospect, it seems as if human nature must be sometimes quite overborne by sorrow and distress. And those persons are surely much to be pitied as well as blamed, who, either through their infidelity, or their disobedience to the gospel, can derive no consolation from it, in the day of adversity.

BUT this subject is, in a peculiar manner, adapted to support and comfort us, when death takes away our pious friends and relatives. We may say of them as our blessed Saviour said of the Jewish ruler's daughter, though not in exactly the same sense, they are not dead, but sleep; that is, they are not dead in the sense which passion, or unenlightened nature, is ready to pronounce them so: They are not lost, or separated from us forever, but only for a time. Their souls, whose virtues and endowments were the principal cause of our attachment to them, and which we most highly valued, are not dead, or in the least injured by the dissolution of the body; they have only quitted this state, and are gone to the paradise above, where they will be forever free from all defilement and imperfection, and beyond the reach of all those pains and sorrows which break the rest and wound the bosoms of mortal men. And though their bodies are at present under the dominion of death, and

D

thus

shut up in the grave, the house appointed for all the living, they are prisoners of hope : For the same power which raised the young woman, above referred to, from the dead, shall, in due time, raise them also, with fresh and unfading beauty, strength and vigor. To these glorious bodies, infinitely more beautiful and charming, than the most lovely and engaging mortal, their souls shall be again united, and enter upon the enjoyment of endless and unmixed felicity. And though they will no more return to us, we must in a little while go to them ;—our bodies to theirs in the grave, and our souls to theirs in the world of spirits : And if, like them, we die in the Lord, we shall again enjoy their society in heaven, upon much better terms than we did here.

THESE considerations must have a powerful tendency to comfort and support us, under such events. We cannot in reason mourn for the dead, though we may for our own loss. And indeed survivors have often great reason to do this. The death of a beloved, prudent and faithful friend, is the greatest of all temporal calamities. It sometimes makes such a breach in the family where it happens, as nothing in this world, can fully repair, and leaves an incurable wound in the bereaved breast. Nor, upon such occasions, is it inconsistent with religion to mourn our loss with moderation, and a becoming submission to the

the divine will. Has not then the husband reason to mourn, when death takes from him his dear wife, to whom he was united, not by the ties of interest, but by the gentle, yet powerful bands of unadulterated love ; in whom he has ever found a prudent, faithful and most affectionate friend ; who never knew a sorrow that he had without sorrowing herself, or a joy that he felt without rejoicing with him ; who with unremitted and almost unexampled tenderness watched over her children to preserve them from evil, endeavouring both by instruction and example to train them up in the ways of honor and usefulness, of religion and virtue ; who made it her continual and delightful employment to render him and all her family happy ; in whom, to allude to Solomon's description of such a woman, ' the heart of her husband did ' safely trust, without fear of spoil ; who ' looked well to the ways of her household, and ate not the bread of idleness ; ' who did him good and not evil all the ' days of her life ; in whose tongue was ' the law of kindness, who stretched out ' her hands to the poor and needy, so that ' the blessing of many ready to perish came ' upon her ; ' and who was his ' companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,' and through faith in him, led a life of sincere, though not ostentatious, piety and devotion, looking for the mercy of God to eternal life? —Has not, I say, he that has lost such a friend

and companion great reason to mourn his loss? He that can be unaffected with such a bereavement must be something more or less than a man. Resignation to the will of Heaven is indeed his indispensable duty, though the desire of his eyes and the delight of his heart is taken from him. But christian resignation does not destroy the feelings of humanity ; nor does religion require that it should. Our blessed Saviour did not chide the sisters of Lazarus for weeping at the death of their brother ; yea he wept with them. Surely then, he will not be offended with a servant for weeping over the grave of a friend nearer than a brother. Nor has the daughter much less reason to mourn her loss, who, when she is just coming into life, and most needs the hand of maternal wisdom and experience to conduct her into the paths of religion and honor, is deprived of a mother from whose affection she has experienced and might have expected every kindness she could reasonably desire, and from whose instruction and example she might have learnt the practice of piety and virtue, of every thing decent and praiseworthy, lovely and of good report : Yea, the brother of such a sister, and all her relatives, have great cause to lament their loss when she is taken from them : Though they should not mourn as those who have no hope, nor murmur against Providence.

SUCH reflections as we have been attending to will not, I hope, be thought unworthy the

the consideration of this assembly in general : But I must acknowledge that in offering them I have had a particular regard to my own case. I have often endeavoured to administer the consolations of religion to other people under their afflictions : And they who undertake to teach others, ought to know how to teach themselves. God has lately given me great occasion for these consolations to support my spirits. It has pleased him in his most wise and holy providence grievously to afflict me and my family, by the sudden death of my beloved companion and faithful friend. Though I have not lived to this age, without often drinking of the cup of affliction, yet I must acknowledge this to be the most bitter draught which I have tasted. But “ the cup “ which my Father hath given me, shall I not “ drink it ? ” I bless God, that I am not without consolation. I have reason to hope that my loss is her gain ; that she is gone to the mansions of heaven, where she is far happier than the happiest mortal ; where there is nothing to disturb her repose, to interrupt her felicity ; where her imperfections are all done away, and her virtues perfected ; where the distresses of the poor and miserable which she has so often mourned, will never more wound her breast ; and where that charity, in which she so much delighted, reigns uncontrouled, and gives law to all the blest inhabitants. Could the departed spirit now address me, it would doubtless be in language to this purpose :
 “ Weep

“ Weep not for me, who am got beyond
 “ the reach of all imperfection and sorrow ;
 “ but rather weep for yourself, and for your
 “ children who are longer to struggle with
 “ the weakness, the temptations and the cala-
 “ mities of mortality. Yea, instead of weep-
 “ ing, if you loved me, you should rather re-
 “ joice, at the happy exchange which I have
 “ made.” If we love our friends we shall
 not be unwilling to suffer for their good. I
 ought not surely to repine at suffering much
 for her happiness, who never thought she
 could do too much to promote mine. When
 I consider these things, I cannot but be sensi-
 ble that even friendship for the deceased,
 though it gives pungency to my sorrow, ought
 in reason to reconcile me to her departure.

BUT I ought further to consider that as
 this event has not taken place, without the
 hand and counsel of God, who woundeth and
 who healeth, who killeth and who maketh
 alive ; so He has a right to do what He pleases
 with me and mine, and always does what is
 best ; and therefore absolute submission to his
 will is both my duty and interest :—That
 death is the common lot of all the children
 of Adam ; and friends ought always to re-
 member that a parting time will come. So
 that this separation is what must have taken
 place at some time or other. And that divine
 Providence, under whose guidance and direc-
 tion such connections are formed, knows when
 and in what manner it is best to dissolve them.

We

We are "fallen on evil days with dangers compass'd round." And possibly such calamities may soon befall us as shall make many who are now alive wish to hide themselves in the grave. Our blessed Saviour speaking in reference to the desolation that was coming upon Jerusalem, says, "wo unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days." And it will not be owing either to our own righteousness, or to the good disposition of our enemies, if the case should not be the same among us. There can be no doubt but God sometimes removes his faithful servants out of this world, with a view to prevent their seeing and bearing a part in the calamities which he is about to bring upon a sinful people. Accordingly we read, that "the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." And there is an express promise to king Josiah to this purpose. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel;—because thine heart was tender, &c. behold therefore I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace, and thine eye shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." It is not possible for me, or any one else to say that it is not for a similar reason that God has taken away my beloved friend. And this consideration affords an additional argument for acquiescence in this event of providence. When I reflect upon my little children, especially upon the new-born infant, lent me, as it were, in exchange

exchange for his mother, thus early deprived of a parent who had too just a sense of her duty, and too much natural affection to neglect the nursing and care of her offspring, and abandon them to unfeeling strangers, my heart is pained within me, for those tender branches of so beloved a vine. But here also religion affords me abundant consolation. God who gave them and has hitherto preserved them, some of them through dangers and sickness, can take care of, and preserve them still. If not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him ; if the very hairs of our head are all numbered by Him ; surely the care of little children, who are of more value than many sparrows, cannot be beneath his notice. He can easily order matters so, that they shall want none of that care and those kind offices which their helpless state requires. Our blessed Saviour, who was himself born of a woman, shewed particular kindness to little children in the days of his ministry on earth : Nor do I doubt but He still bears the same affection to such, delighting to be-friend them and do them good. Wherefore committing them into the hands of God who made them, and of his Son who redeemed them, and doing the duty of a father myself, I need not be anxious either about their temporal or eternal welfare.

SUCH reflections as these give me much consolation in the midst of my mourning, though by reason of those social affections,
which

which are by no means to be condemned, I am not able to get wholly above all grief upon this occasion.—Give me leave to add that I have no doubt but God has wise and kind purposes to answer with respect to myself and my family, by means of this dispensation of his providence :—That it is designed to make us wiser and better, less fond of this vain world, and more earnest and diligent in seeking that eternal life which the gospel reveals :—That it is designed to make me more intirely devoted to him and his service in the station to which he has called me ; and therefore more likely to be serviceable to you, in the work of the ministry ; particularly better qualified to sympathise with, and to comfort them that are in sorrow ; which I should esteem as one valuable effect of my affliction. Indeed one principal reason of my thus freely laying open to you, the sources of my own consolation on this occasion, is that you may be comforted under similar trials, if they have already befallen you, or should befall you, with the same “ comfort wherewith I am myself comforted of God.” And this, I hope, will at least be some apology, for speaking so much concerning myself and my own private trouble, and in some degree digressing from my subject. Though, indeed, I do not apprehend that this visitation ought to be considered as only a private affliction. The death of a person, in the midst of her days, whose example was at once so engaging, and so

E

worthy

worthy of imitation, is a loss not only to her family, but to all her friends and acquaintance. Nor do I doubt but my beloved hearers in general, and especially those who have more “ fully known her manner of life, faith, charity and patience,” are afflicted by her death, and mourn both their own loss and mine. I have known too much of your esteem and friendship for her, and have experienced too many instances of your kindness to me, to leave any room to doubt this. And while I, with gratitude, and a kind of sad pleasure, reflect upon your generous sympathy with me, I pray God that you may not be without the consolations of religion to support you under this and every other trial, that providence may bring upon you; and that you may have wisdom and grace to improve them for his glory and your own good;—to be followers of your deceased friends, so far as they followed Christ.

5. AND to conclude; since Jesus Christ hath by the gospel brought to light a state of future and eternal happiness for the righteous, let us make it our great concern to obtain a title to it; by a patient continuance in well-doing seeking for glory, honor and immortality. Temporal death we cannot escape, nor if we are wise shall we desire it: Our bodies must shortly go to the grave and see corruption; but our immortal souls shall either be convoyed by angels to the realms
of

of bliss, or thrust down into that place of torment, where there is no joy, no consolation, no hope. God calls upon us both by his word and by his providence to prepare for eternity ; and if we will not regard the call, in vain, as to us, hath Christ abolished death, and brought eternal life to light, since in the error of our ways we seek the former, and will not lay hold on the latter. Let us, then, in this their day mind the things of our peace before they are hidden from our eyes ; and in a particular manner attend to the admonitions of providence in the departure of our friends and acquaintance, imagining that we hear, as it were, a voice sounding from the chamber of death, and from the tomb saying, “ be ye also ready, improve the fleeting moments ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither ye are hastening.” Did we properly regard such admonitions, and now live as dying, immortal creatures ought to live, we should be prepared to meet death with calmness and composure of mind, however suddenly or unexpectedly it might come upon us : And when we quit these bodies to be deposited in the dust for a time, our never-dying spirits would fly swiftly to the regions of light, and joy unspeakable and full of glory. There, without doubt, we shall find many of our old friends and acquaintance who are gone before us. And perhaps the felicity of that place will in part arise from
their

their society and converse.* There we shall be introduced into "the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." O what joy and gladness of heart will spring from hence ! Imagination can at present form no adequate idea of it. O when shall we enter upon this thrice blessed state ? When shall we go to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to spend an eternity in the sublime exercises of knowledge, purity and love ?

* See 1 Thes. ii. 19, 20.



